

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Agri-Cover Inc

North Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Agri-Cover Embraces Lean Techniques

Client Profile:

Agri-Cover, Inc., founded in 1981 as a manufacturer of roll tarps for commercial and agriculture trucks, employs 88 people and distributes its products throughout the United States and Canada. Originally located in a former school building in Courtney, North Dakota, the company moved several miles south to Jamestown, North Dakota in 1995. Agri-Cover expanded in this location twice and, in 2002, built an additional 65,000 square foot building. The facility expansions and addition accommodate successful, progressive products. From its early days, the company has expanded its product line to include a soft, roll-up tonneau cover marketed as Access Cover®, a pickup cover that conveniently rolls up to provide access to the truck bed. The company's most recent product is a personal utility snow plow called Snow Sport®.

Situation:

Agri-Cover recognized that to sustain its success and manage rapid growth, it needed to seek ways to maximize plant efficiency and maintain a high level of employee involvement. The company wanted to incorporate lean manufacturing methods into its new facility addition from the very beginning. Before moving into the new building, Agri-Cover sought the assistance of the North Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership (North Dakota MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to guide the company through the lean process.

Solution:

North Dakota MEP worked with Agri-Cover to introduce the principles of lean manufacturing to all production employees. North Dakota MEP presented a Lean 101 workshop, thereby providing all team members with the knowledge and necessary tools to advance to the next stage of lean transformation. Next, North Dakota MEP's manufacturing specialists went onto the production floors to conduct value stream mapping exercises at both the old and new locations. All employees participated in the process of identifying operating inefficiencies and suggesting improvements at their individual work posts. With North Dakota MEP's help, Agri-Cover employees corrected unbalanced lines to increase production.

Results:

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Reduced lead time by 5 days.

Reduced defects by working with suppliers on non-conforming parts.

Reduced space required for inventory.

Encouraged a sense of teamwork and improved employee understanding.

Created an employee suggestion box.

Testimonial:

"The North Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership helped us become more effective and efficient. They did a great job. We are on a continuous improvement journey thanks to North Dakota MEP."

Bryan Miller, Assistant Vice President